

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 1689

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XV, TGEN, AS
SUBJECT: ANTARCTICA -- EMBASSY ANALYSIS OF LIKELY GOA
OBJECTIVES IN ANTARCTIC TREATY FIELD

REF: (A) CANBERRA 1637 (NOTAL), (B) STATE 29578 (NOTAL),
(C) STATE A-840, (D) CANBERRA 1131, (E) CANBERRA 0777,
(F) WELLINGTON 0831, (G) CANBERRA 0683

1. ALTHOUGH AS INSTRUCTED IN REF B, NOT RPT NOT CONTACTING GOA
OFFICIALS DIRECTLY, EMBOFF RESPONSIBLE FOR ANTARCTIC AFFAIRS
TOOK OPPORTUNITY OFFERED BY DELIVERY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
STUDY -- EIS (REFS A AND C) TO HOLD GENERAL DISCUSSION ON
ANTARCTIC MATTERS WITH M.J. MCKEOWN, DIRECTOR, LOS/ANTARCTICA
SECTION, DFA.

2. MCKEOWN FREELY VOLUNTEERED ALMOST AT OUTSET OF DISCUSSION
THAT GOA HAS BEEN UNDERTAKING A MAJOR POLICY REVIEW ON
ANTARCTICA, ALTHOUGH HE NOT VERY FORTHCOMING AS TO ITS NATURE
AND EXTENT. WE GATHERED FORTHCOMING SHAPE OF GOA POLICY
STANCE LIKELY TO BE MORE FULLY AIRED AT MARCH PREPARATORY
MEETING.

3. EMBOFF GATHERED FROM MCKEOWN THAT AUSTRALIA INDEED EAGER
RESOLVE LIVING RESOURCES ISSUES AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, WHILE
DEFERRING QUESTION OF MINERAL AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES FOR
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FURTHER ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS. HE
SAID U.S. HAD BEEN PRESSING FOR EARLY ENACTMENT OF DEFINITIVE
RULES FOR MINERALS AND PETROEUM RESOURCES EXPLOITATION AND
WONDERED WHETHER DEPARTMENT'S DISTRIBUTION OF EIS AT THIS
TIME REFLECTED A USG POLICY CHANGE. EMBOFF MADE NO COMMENT,
OTHER THAN TO AGAIN REPEAT DISCLAIMER CONTAINED IN REF C.

4. MCKEOWN SAID GOA NATURALLY WOULD LIKE TO SEE LIVING RESOURCES ISSUES SOLVED WITHIN TREATY FRAMEWORK. HE WENT ON TO SPECULATE, HOWEVER, THAT IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO CREATE A LARGER INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION UNDER THE TREATY UMBRELLA TO COVER THE EXPLOITATION OF LIVING RESOURCES IN THE SOUTHERN OCEAN. MCKEOWN NOT RPT NOT MORE PRECISE AS TO JUST WHAT GOA MIGHT HAVE IN MIND.

5. WE SEE NO INDICATION GOA INTENDS MODIFY STANCE ON ITS TERRITORIAL CLAIMS IN ANTARCTICA, ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS PERFECTLY WILLING ALLOW CURRENT TREATY STATUS QUO STAND. ALL PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES TO ANTARCTICA IN PARLIAMENT REFER TO "AUSTRALIAN ARCTIC TERRITORY," WITH NO RPT NO MENTION OF FACT THAT THIS ONLY A CLAIM. GOA APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT MINERALS AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES ISSUES -- NEITHER OF WHICH ARE IN THEIR EYES ECONOMIC REALITIES AT THIS POINT, DESPITE SENATOR WEBSTER'S RECENT STATEMENTS (REFS D, E, F AND G) -- CAN BE DEFUSED BY THE TREATY PARTIES' TAKING A STRONG STAND FOR FURTHER INDEPTH STUDY OF BOTH THE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES. GOA APPEARS TO BELIEVE SUCH ACTION WILL SATISFY OR QUIET THOSE NATIONS DESIROUS OF TAKING UP MINERALS ISSUE IN UN CONTEXT, WHILE AVOIDING FOR PRESENT NEED FOR CONFRONTATION OVER THEIR TERRITORIAL CLAIMS.

6. GOA WILL BE REPRESENTED AT MARCH PREPCOM BY AMBASSADOR BRENNAN FROM BERN; BY E. LAUTERPACHT, DFA LEGAL ADVISOR, WHO IN EUROPE ON OTHER BUSINESS; AND BY REGULAR AUSTRALIAN ANTARCTIC AFFAIRS OFFICER AT AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN LONDON. MCKEOWN INDICATED THEY WOULD WELCOME CONSULTATION
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WITH U.S. DEL BEFORE, DURING OR AFTER MEETING. PERCIVAL

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